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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~SHIFTS OF MALES OF MILITARY AGE TO AGRICULTURAL WORK
DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1943 AND OF 1942 ^{1/}

During the first quarter of 1943 there is evidence that the number of men aged 18 - 37 shifting from nonagricultural to agricultural employment was greater than might have been expected on the basis of the number shifting during the first quarter of 1942, when allowance is made for the decreased number of males of military age in the civilian population. It is estimated that from January to April, approximately 110,000 men shifted to farm work from other occupations, in excess of the number who otherwise would have made such a shift. Around 70,000 of these are estimated to have moved to farms from nonfarm areas ^{2/} during the quarter, while approximately 40,000 were nonfarm residents who shifted from non-agricultural to agricultural employment without moving to farms. With respect to the latter group, the indications are that the majority of them came from less essential industries such as retail and wholesale trade, domestic service, etc. and the minority came from manufacturing, mining, communications, transportation, and utilities. This contrasts with the situation in the first quarter of last year, when the majority of the corresponding group came from the more essential industries.

The tabulations were made for the purpose of estimating the effect of Selective Service regulations regarding the deferment of farm workers in producing a movement of workers into agriculture from other industries. Such an estimate is not possible without an assumption regarding the normal or expected movement of workers into agriculture from some other work status as a part of the seasonal increase in agricultural employment. ^{3/} The assumption made as to the expected shifts of males of military age to agriculture in the first quarter of 1943 is

^{1/} An analysis of special tabulations made by the Current Surveys Division of the Bureau of the Census, showing January work status of men of military age employed in agriculture in April 1942 and April 1943.

The Census tabulations provide distributions by work status in January of males of military age employed in agriculture in April, by farm and nonfarm residence, for 1942 and 1943 for approximately half of the sample used in the Monthly Report on the Labor Force.

^{2/} This estimate is based on the assumption that after allowance is made for the reduced number of males of military age in the civilian population, the farm-to-farm movement of persons of military age remained at the same relative level in the first quarter of 1943 as in the corresponding quarter of 1942.

^{3/} For this reason the estimates here presented cannot be regarded as precise. Their chief usefulness is to indicate a probable value for the magnitude of the shifts to farm work, which have in recent months evoked much speculation about a "back-to-farm" movement.

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that the same proportion of males of military age in the civilian population would shift to agriculture as in the first quarter of 1942. Because of an estimated 27 percent reduction in the number of males 18 - 37 years of age in the civilian population, the expected movement for the first quarter of 1943 was assumed to be at a level that much smaller than occurred in the first quarter of 1942. Even with the additional movement caused by the draft deferment policy, the total movement into agriculture from nonagricultural industry did not involve as large a number of males of military age in the first quarter of 1943 as in the corresponding quarter of 1942.

There were a number of developments during the quarter in addition to Selective Service policy which might have changed the volume of occupational shifts from that of the first quarter of 1942. Employment in construction, distributive trades, and services decreased during the first quarter of this year, in contrast with the stable or expanding employment in these industries during the first quarter of last year. This alone would tend to reduce the inmovement to farm employment of men 18 - 37 years of age somewhat less than an amount proportionate to the decrease in males of military age in the civilian population. On the other hand, in the absence of a policy of deferment of farm workers, the amount of total movement to agriculture might have decreased by a greater than proportional amount during the first quarter of this year, when alternative opportunities in essential industries were greater than last year. For these reasons the intermediate assumption was used.

In the southern counties of the sample there was almost no shift to agriculture in excess of the number which ordinarily would be expected. In the counties of the North Central States, the shift was greatest, and in that area, in most cases, involved migration to farms. In the northeastern counties the shifts into agriculture of persons continuing to live in nonfarm areas was relatively greatest, while in the West both types of shifts were of approximately equal importance.

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